

*TIME
HAS NO SHADOW*



KATHERINE GARRISON CHAPIN



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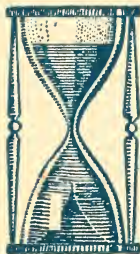
BY

KATHERINE GARRISON CHAPIN

Author of

"Outside of the World"

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TO
GARRISON
My Bright Mariner

5/8/56 Chin, Hiel.



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PART I

At Stonehenge

HERE are the wise men baffled, here is a mark
Deeply made, cutting forever into the mind.
The mind cannot escape it, where it stands stark,
A word once spoken, a fervent message unsigned.

Measure the sun, measure the track of the stars,
The seasons' curve, the line where summer light fell.
Ponder these stones with their age-indelible scars,
And learn no atom of all that this place can tell.

But if you have faced the heavy weight of defeat,
Bent down to the earth with sand and blood in your
eyes,
Or stood in the cleft where darkness and darkness meet,
Knowing the imminent presence of light in the
skies;—

Then you will feel this desire unfathomed, deep,
To set a sign forever, spoken or still.
It stands undefeated here, where the long winds sweep;
I know, for I would say it and have not the skill.

Sails in the Distance

Low sky of breathless summer afternoon!
The warm air lies
Unstirred along the grass,
Unstirred within each crevice of the loose built wall.
The ripe fruit does not fall.
Dark amber swarms of hanging butterflies
Cluster the branch like autumn leaves.
This is the summer lull,
Languid and beautiful.
A strange inertia paling the low sky,
Making light, luminous, gray the widening sea.
Stillness! No wing floats by.
No bird note slides from the motionless dry tree.
The words I write are whispered paper words.
The flowers stand waxen, stiff,
In the garden hollow.

Must a long thought end in if,
And no answer follow?
Must the mind swoon
Like this still afternoon,
Forever and forever stay suspended?

Across the distance, cutting this pale sea,
A tall white schooner swings;
Turns, till the masts are one clear line;

Leans, till the curved sails fill
And passes, urged by the steady will
Of a strong wind blowing clear,
That blows not now, not here.

The Shape of Living

WITH leaves scattered,
Branches broken and blown,
Undefeated still,
Its roots plunged strongly into depth,
The tree has grown.

Not bent to earth
By weight of bloom, or strife
Of winter wind;
Against the bitter sky it keeps
The shape of life.

Dearth is not death;
You shall not lose in giving;
Though stripped and bare,
The structure of the heart still keeps
The shape of living.

Their Passion Remains

WHAT the mind of man has created,
What the hand of man has made with amorous patience,
Placing word by word in eloquent sequence,
Fashioning out of stone with the long worn hammer and
chisel,

Laying color by color, inevitable in design;
These, made for his use, his pleasure, his worship,
May in time be lost, or may be scattered or broken;

Or stand, a vast piled, strong, brutal arena,
Holding still the shouts, and cries of the anguished,
Stand, a tall spire above some slumbering landscape,
Look down from the wall in colors that speak in silence;

Or broken, a headless torso with wind in the garment,
Colors faded, the intention strong in the outline,
Words of the song imperfect, the tune forgotten.
But the flame, the necessity that made them
Still burns us. Their passion remains.

Eclipse

Now a new darkness falls across the land.
The air is strange, the startled birds are flying,
Circling above their nests, low-winged and crying.
In a green dusk the shadowed mountains stand.

This slow approaching dark is not the night.
It may be the world's end, the end of time;
Stars may drop, and a cold wave of space climb
Forever between us and warmth, and light.

Fold close about you your remembered hours
Of hot earth, blue leaf shadow, golden spire
Reaching above the ranks of meadow flowers,
Delight of the eye, the pulse, in the sun's fire.
Before this long impending wave has rolled
Over you, before you have grown blank and cold.

The insects in the grass tune a night sound.
The wind is cool, the moon is moving over.
The sun is almost lost beneath its cover,
And draws thin crescent patterns on the ground.

Now is the moment of the total dark.
Yet this celestial fire does not die;
In iridescent flame it lights the sky
A brighter halo for the moon's dull mark.

Welcome the shadow set against your sun,
That for an instant shields your too frail sight.
Look close into its darkness; you may find
The spark of a fresh universe begun;
The far revealing sources of a light
That, all unshadowed, might have struck you blind.

Companioned

WOMEN are bound by deep unbroken ties
Throughout their length of ages on the earth.
A cord not cut and knotted at each birth,
A quickening pulse which death and doom defies.
Love's sweet and secret, fervent mystery
Is never shared by woman with her lover;
Some ancient plaint, out of a book's dim cover,
Speaks more to her of her heart's history.

In the high moments of her life she goes
Companioned by the beautiful, the brave,
Wearing the fate of Helen for a rose,
Yearning with Iseult over the dark wave,
Watching the slow bright-petaled moments fall
Within Francesca's close Italian wall.

Before Penelope's unfinished loom
She sits to wait, so does not wait forsaken.
Or in the path an earthquake war has taken
Mourns with a Trojan queen her ravished tomb.
And when the hour strikes that sees her lie
Borne down to earth by her triumphant pain,
She hears the shepherds whispering again
And sees a new star in the darkened sky.

No woman walks her way of life alone.
A foot has marked the path that she must tread,
Picking her way from sharpened stone to stone,
Or on soft grass the spring has carpeted.
Her laughter on an echoing air is blown,
And when she weeps she shall be comforted.

Before the Wave Breaks

THERE is a stillness
Between thunder and thunder,
There is a green swathe
The plow turns under.

There shall be peace
Between sorrow and sorrow,
Between lightning at night
And the dark dawn tomorrow.

Seize the clear moment
That time never makes;
There is smooth lifted water
Before the wave breaks.

Maya Frescoes

For Cornelia

THIS is strength.
This firm carved rock,
Cut to a measured length
Holds in a block

Pride and grief,
Passion unspent,
Life in austere relief
Made permanent.

Ask no more,
Seek not nor reach.
This meaning was before
A softer speech.

Words are sand
Slipping away,
Carve with a steady hand
What you would say.

Memory Clear

WHERE you have once lived the house will never be empty.

When you go away, you leave behind what was not there before.

Others may look for you, they will go through rooms saying,

She is not here, she has gone away, she has closed the door.

And when they have left your room I shall come to find you.

I shall sit at your window looking across the bay;

I shall watch the evening light on the distant islands.

"How the light transfigures all that it touches," I shall hear you say.

This was our home. Though we cannot possess it forever,

The happiness that we have had will always remain,
Strong as the dark hills that shoulder the sunrise,

Sharp as the salt wind, as the smell of pine in the drip of the rain.

This we shall have to remember when all is over,

Joy, like a flight of sails in the morning sun,

Memory, clear as the far blue line of distance,

Bright as the flame of the marching trees when the summer is done.

I shall sit and watch till night changes the waters
From blue to silver, from silver to shining steel.
The moon will lift a pale white face to the window,
I shall not be alone. You will be there; you will know
what I feel.

Shooting Star

BENEATH the hill the house is gay
With color and music and yellow light;
Above the hill a single star
Falls through the cold night.

Here take my hand. Time hurries on;
There is this moment for warmth and laughter.
A white star sliding out in space
May be all, hereafter.

Maine Night

WE are alone,
the night is gone,
there is no sky,
The fog has blotted out the stars,
the waters lie
Hushed at our feet.
The fog has laid a silence on the little harbor.
The quick beat,
And pulse of restless boats is stilled.
The earth has broken loose, it floats
In a cold vapor where the dark is spilled.

We are alone,
draw closer
lest the cold fog drown you too,
Or quench this rising flame of love.
We are alone,
There is no world about us,
only you
And I, and this great silence,
Silence of hushed night, of darkness,
Of your quiet breast,
And the long wordless silence of my mouth
Where your mouth is pressed.

"This Love, Long Seasoned"

READING a poet's musing in his rhyme
Of feverish love, kindled by its own dearth,
That dies of surfeit, comes again to birth
In brief fantastic intervals of time;
I thought how love that draws a steadier breath,
Glows in the mind, sets pulsing in the blood,
Is not the frail creation of a mood,
Is plain as life, unqualified as death.

This love long seasoned, tried against the storm,
Not furnished with the trappings of romance,
Will still have power to quicken and grow warm
Beyond the momentary circumstance;
The promise kept, the long tryst falsely broken,
The wrong look given or the right word spoken.

II

Let us be glad that we are done with these,
And walk a rough earth, share a simple roof,
And do not scorn the texture of the woof
That holds the warp of our day's tapestries.
Our love can know suspense, delight, and fear,
A width of longing widened by a day,
Made poignant for the heart too long away,
Or a quick suffocation, if too near.

There is a thunder in the closing door
That shuts the world out. When you turn to me
There is no need of speech. The liquid floor
Slides out beneath our feet, and we shall be
 Lost, lost forever, on a long wave's crest,
 Plunged in a starry darkness, breast to breast.

Mediterranean Morning

PRESS me no greater weight, bear me no deeper load.
There is a place where the mind refuses, the senses lean.
I shall blot my eyes forever with what I have seen
From this ledge, from the curve of this incredible road.

The wind has not yet awakened, the wind is asleep
On the water's edge, the receding rocks are still cold,
Washed by the night rain, agate and smoldering gold.
On the shore over the pebbles, purple blue ripples creep.

Look, more than beauty beckons, more than sheer, sharp
height!
Where last night, hiding it, hung long clouds, limp, unfurled,
Snow has fallen on top of the great wall of the world,
Morning sun strikes white fire, strikes with invincible
light.

And where the bay curves, molded by runways of
sand,
Waters that moved and washed once under the Roman
prow,
Bear a light winged plane, its companion adventurer,
now
Stretching across the ages a recognizable hand.

Standing here in the sunlight, above the wide breathing
 sea,
At a sweep, at a glance is to know all for one moment.
 Time,
And the strength of man and his passing; the brief tick-
 ing rhyme
He is, in the sonorous pulse of eternity.

Clear in the azure morning, against this slope, lies the
 long way
Of his life, the nets of his toil, the vine of his seed,
His fortress of pride, the roof of his shelter and need,
His broken temple of victory crowning the bay.

And within this sweep, from the dark terraced earth to
 the height
Of snow shining mountain, down to the curve of the
 sea,
Lies the vast dream of man, what it was, what it is to be,
As if spoken now for our ears, shown once clear for our
 sight.

Full Stream

LET your heart fill to overflowing,
Not counting loss or gain,
As this thin dark stream in winter,
After a long rain.

There is time enough for the parched season,
For the dry lack and drought,
Fill your heart while there is abundance;
Love may run out.

Give more than is asked or needed,
And when it is gone,
There will be peace, and greener meadows
To look upon.

Time Has No Shadow

CLOUD shadows move across the hills,
Slowly changing, the shadow of the straight tree marks
the grass.

Light spills small-winged shadows between flowers,
The dial throws a dark line on the hours,
And steel wings mark the earth over which they pass.

You stand between me and the sun;
I bear your shadow as a cool caress.
But time so long ago begun
And swiftly moving,
Only time is shadowless.

Morning After

OPEN the window, let the cold air blow through the
rooms,
Clear out the talk that hung in the smoke of the cigarettes,
All that remains of the night, the warm glances, the fumes
Of furtive possession, the intimate touch, and the cloying regrets.

They were scattered and dropped with the ashes swept
to the hearth,
The crackling laughter broke and spilled with the wine,
The vague hungry passions were empty when run to the earth
By the hounds of the music, following close with a
rhythmical whine.

I have washed my hands long in cold water and bathed
my face,
And flung the evening away like a soiled and tattered gown.
I do not ask to stand always untouched in this place,
But never to burn with false flame, nor in such dark
shallow eddies to drown.

Girl in the Sun

HERE on the smooth white sand, by the blue water,
Sleek brown body and limbs of a sea god's daughter,
Powerful, indolent and sophisticated—
Studied simplicity of nakedness, decorated
With scarlet mouth and toes and pointed finger-tips,
The short white tunic drawn tight over breast and
hips—
Small breast, strong thighs,
Anointed with perfumed oil,
Complete, in the sun she lies.

Yet there is a strange kinship
With a bedecked and powdered queen who played,
Lovely and indifferent, at being a dairy maid,
Nor heard the long low wake
Of thunder. *There is little sound*
In a world about to break.

Greek Column at Nîmes

SUDDENLY, out of the tortuous expression of ages,
Past, present, mingling, now superimposed or broken up
from below,
To come once upon perfection, to stand breath-taken
before one simple
Strong clear thought, one intention, one form in space,
is to know

Happiness; that is not the loud shout of huzzahs, the
eye's cup brimming over
With deep feeling held too long, released at last in the
heart's cry,
That surges upward to a peak, a pitch, a flame's point
and breaks unended—
The Gothic spire, the sweep of violins, the starred rocket
against the sky.

To stand before this warm white stone, strong-poised,
serene, completed,
Mellowed and rounded to the touch, along the smooth
unwavering ascent,
Each long line upward in a purposed ending, a rich
flowering
Of living leafage, curled over and eternal; this is hap-
piness. A content

That stirs deeply and returns to its own place of satisfaction,
Rests in definite limits, is firm as the rounded pedestal
of stone.
Roar over, you waves of time and eruption, change of
mood and impulse and ambition
Toward beauty. This shining marble column in a dark
archway stands alone.

Secret

Van Gogh Exhibition

THERE is one secret moment that reveals
Pulse, heart beat, the quick drawn breath of the mind;
Then it is past, and no trace left behind.

It may be one note in a voice that lingers over a name,
But is gone when the voice is silenced.
Recalled, it will not be the same.

No, you will be forgotten, I shall be forgotten,
Except in words we put together that remain.
But the great will be remembered, and in moments that
make plain

Their passion. Not alone
The vast symphony, the large impressive canvas,
The piled eloquence of stone.

Brahms, in one passage of heart searching melody,
Emily Dickinson in "the accent of a coming foot . . ."
The fragment of some wind-blown Victory.

And you Vincent, in your Field of Grass,
Each blade a knife edge, each color a spear,
Your secret revealed, naked, breath-takingly clear,
Before the casual unseeing eyes that pass, and pass . . .

Bird in Space

Brancusi

THIS shall be forever flying,
 never alighting,
Forever rising, never curving
 or lying
Out on the wind.
Into space rising, and crying.

O words,
Be as this smooth, hard, polished marble,
 extending
Into the space of the mind;
 not ending
Here with the voice.
As the edge of stone, bending
The arc of light in an unplotted curve,
Where no wings swerve,
Beyond the space of birds,
 Rise, O words!

PART II

Bright Mariner

HAD I known that you were going
I could have given you,
At least, good speed;
But you slipped away so suddenly
That I was left standing on the shore
Watching into space,
Not knowing that you would never come back
Till I felt the waters of the incoming tide
Cold about my heart.

I do not ask for you again.
I know the sea you sail does not touch these shores.
I only look for a distant "all hail," like the white crest
 of a wave against the horizon,
Or a signal light flashing once, sharp against the sky.

Sail on, my bright sturdy mariner!
Let out a full sheet to your new winds,
Taste the clear spray of your new waters.
You were made for flight and swiftness
And eternal freedom.
Nothing shall weigh you down
Or call you back to the sweet earth,
Or the shape we knew,
Or the place that held you immeasurably dear.
I have cut the anchor chain that bound you to me,
And the great strength of my love,

And the heavy ache of my loneliness,
Which might bear upon you and hold you back,
I have fashioned into a shining silken fabric,
To be the highest and strongest of your new sails.

Sixth Sense

MAN, deprived of sight,
Grows sharp and keen
To the feeling of light,
The sound of things seen.

Deprived of sound,
His eyes see clear;
Shapes form around
What he cannot hear.

With a new sense
He bridges across
The incompetence
Of a great loss.

And out of the dark
He learns to feel
A thought's deep mark,
The power to heal

Of unseen sight,
Unspoken word,
Which by a light
Touch may be stirred.

A sense of living
In blackened root,

Decay receiving
The ripened fruit.

Where feeling ends,
Where memories live,
He apprehends
Grown thus sensitive.

After Sorrow

AND now, I said, for a time I must turn away from the
sea,

And walk in the curve of these close-hilled valleys,
Where never a sound of wind on water shall come to me.

Here in the dark woods, in cool silence, tranquil, profound,

I shall walk slowly, seeing little ahead
But the trunks of trees, but the trace of sunlight over
the ground;

Learning the intricate pattern and way of branch with
leaf,

The measure of life, of strong root and bough,
Of curled frond, the frail cup holding the dew, though
the dew be brief.

With ears made sharp, with eyes quickened to look
deep, I shall learn

To see the changing shape of a shadow, to hear
The low rustle of air murmuring under the fern.

I shall find a trail, though I bruise my feet and feel my
way.

Knowing the place where I stand, this tree I touch,
This knowledge I hold in the hand is enough for a day.

I shall forget the wide blue stretching horizon, the pale
Line like the line between sea and sky, I watched,

Straining the eyes, where you passed over it like a
straight white sail!

And if for a time I can only know the sun is set by the
bright

Glow on the topmost leaves, yet above me
Stars will come, and drop down, and hang in the
branches at night.

New Year's Eve

THE sky that curtains the old year
Is thick with cloud.

There is a cold and windy space
Between the worlds.

I shall climb the highest tower at the land's edge
That reaches into the darkness,
Into the wind.

When the earth turns tonight,
If the sphere of time
And the sphere of space
Touch for a moment,
I may catch your signal,
Or you may see the beacon fire
That I have lit for you.

O starry Navigator,
You have passed beyond the need
Of earth-burning light.
I shall know only by the stir in the heart,
And the flicker across my own fire,
That you have passed this way once more.

And if in that swift moment
I may not speak or call to you,
Or reach with a streaming signal

Into the wind,
You will know that I have stood the watch,
And that the searching beacon of my love
Burns on into the years.

At Gettysburg

SUMMER has come again in full perfection.

There is peace over these farms; over the grain
The wind blows lightly, rippling golden billows.

There is no scar left, no shadow, no remembrance of
pain.

Where the stream ran red, the buttercups are growing,
Where a great charge fell, the orchards ripen and
bend;

Earth has forgotten, earth has healed, not remembered—
Earth, that holds the root and core, the beginning and
end.

This is peace, this fervor of growth, the mighty
Ripening, breeding blaze of midsummer sun.
When the last gun stilled, the last horse reared, stum-
bled
Into the last ditch, this healing had begun.

Over your own far-stretching field of battle,
With deep scarred earth-works raised against pain
and grief,
Do not walk. Do not set stones for remembrance,
Carved sharp in anguish, carved into clear relief.

Let the grass grow! Let the seeds root and scatter.
Fill the hollows with blossoms, the air with their
breath.

You shall reap a harvest above your sorrow,
Peace from despair and destruction, life from death.

Proud Assurance

THE wind-blown foam of the wave scatters
Back to the deep water and is tossed again.
The moving form repeats and changes
Endlessly, is different and yet the same.
Rock bears a carved and widening crevice
Where the shifting ice has lain.

Cycle of curved wing meeting water,
Day turning under the night's long dark upswing,
Pulse of geyser from the earth center—
There is an assurance in this deep rhythm
Of return and pattern, an assurance
Proud as the returning spring.

Trees Under Snow

THE quiet, the essential shape,
Of trees, the delicate, the slow
Thrust upward, and the springing twig,
Are seen more clearly under snow.

No line is lost, no rising curve
Is flattened, but the drooping branch
Bends downward closer to the earth
Under the snow-soft avalanche.

O dark unconquerable life
That does not break nor find escape,
This gleaming weight shall serve to show
The strength of your essential shape.

Monument

AND did you think because your name
Came slowly, in a broken breath,
We had abandoned you to death?

And if no quiet monument
Marks out a little place of sun,
We had forgotten how you went?

The cold wind of oblivion
Shall never blow across the place
That holds remembrance of your face.

Your quick delight, your tenderness,
The depth of your unerring look,
The straight spear of your manliness.

The eager memories you poured
Into the shortened years, remain.
Now that the grief is spent, the pain

Is almost done. And where the air,
In a cool dawn is clear and still,
I know that I have found you there . . .

With Long Remembered Light

It is autumn. Here at the edge of the marsh
A few bright leaves are turning.
Suddenly it is autumn.
Though the sun is burning
With a clear heat, yet the blue is thinned.
There is a smell of leaves on the wind.
Wild ducks fly south on a single track.

It is autumn; still you have not come back.

All the summer I have looked for you.
Now it is over. Now I have lived through
Each season, and the complete long year.
I know each form, each rhythm, each changing color
With you not here.
And I know that what moves and passes
As surely as this light wind over the bending grasses
Is gone. As certainly as this rounded apple
Ripening on the tree
Will fall—each definite form we see
Must perish and fade.

Summer is over. The yellow field,
The scarlet vines, the sweetness in the air,
Are not warmth, are not the colors of blossoming.
Summer must yield
To the dry wind, to the rain, to the frost.

The flower is withered, the wing is broken,
The beloved face forever is lost.

This I have learned. And I do not ask to see you again,
To solace the heart's hunger, to ease the pain
Of hope unfulfilled.

Where the bird has flown the nest is empty;
Where the sands are spilled
The glass is clear.

This I know. Yet I stand here
Watching the summer go down in surrender,
Vanquished and tossed,
Before the cold wind, the rain, the implacable frost,
And I stand here knowing
That nothing, nothing forever is lost.

Spring will return after the long bare winter.
Blossoms will foam
Up from the meadows again,
And again the pale root in the loam
Will fill, and the sap will rise,
And under softening skies
The earth will forget, promise, yield and remain.

There is an end to pain . . .

And there is a gift once given
No power of earth or heaven
Can take away, till our quickened mind
Is still, the throat cold and the eyes blind.

What you once were,
When you walked the earth, felt the stir
In your heart too large for the small confined
Beat of its pulse, too strong
For your incomplete song,
What you once were remains forever behind.

And I know,
Even in sudden loneliness,
When the dry, sceptical winds blow,
I know that you are not far,
Though I cannot say, it is in space, it is a star
Whereon you move,
And I cannot prove
By rule, or word, or law,
Or make the reason clear
By which I know
That you are sometimes strangely near,
So near that I can reach
Without the need of look or speech
To find you.
It is enough for me
That this can be.
I shall not try to hold you. I shall set you free
To be a part once more
Of all you were before, to move
Beyond our reach of love,
Yet present to us still, and bright
With long remembered light,
 With long remembered light.

PART III
HOSPITAL SKETCHES

Interne

APPRENTICE to life and death,
Pin a gay flower on your coat!
It will not bruise the throat
That draws a tightened breath,
Or slow the quick pulse, fever rushed,
Or stir the dull heart, hushed.
It is harmless; it can do
No more than you
White coated, debonair,
So leave it there.

Mental Case

SHE who was once a clear-eyed girl
Came in this afternoon with four attendants,
Two for the night, two for the day.
Her hair, that used to curl,
Grown coarse and gray,
Her wide eyes gone astray.

Early and late
She sits and murmurs to herself,
Or laughs an empty sound;
And any quick intrusion
Sets her screaming.

They think to operate—
A small bruise found
On one of those once lovely-lifted breasts.

If, in the operating room
Some fault of hand,
Or vigilance that tests
The ether-laden breath,
Slips her to freedom
They will call it "death."

Telephone Operator

So many messages of great import
Have passed her plugging fingers,
Hummed across her ears—
Hurry calls, death, danger, fears,
Anguish and love—
That she is like the rock
Where the sea breaks too often,
Each succeeding shock
Leaving it more smooth and flat and round.
She does not know the sound
Of Heaven, or Hell,
The place of bliss, or the place of those rejected.
Her only answer is, *Doing well*,
Or if not well, at least, *As well*
As could have been expected.

Anesthetic

WITH rhythmic breath
Take in oblivion.
Count slowly, one and one.
This is a minor death.
Under your shuttered eyes
Slip out; where darkness lies
There is escape from pain.
Take all it offers.
Flesh and nerves remain,—
You will return to them again.

Delivery Room

IN the next hundred years
No one will ever point
To a great man's birth place.
This is the room that interferes
With national monuments.

Hospital Bed

LIE down, lie down on this impersonal bed,
Part rack, part table, lifted for the view
Of cold intelligent eyes. Perhaps the dead
Have earned the right to sleep more soft, but you
Are still alive, and yet no longer you.
A proving ground, a field of honor, or a name
In an unused record—it is much the same.

Over you in undulating waves shall pass
Conjecture and opinion, warmth and slow cold,
Noise far away, silence too close to hold,
And sleep as light as breath against a glass.

The strange inverted forms of day and night
Wheel slowly round you and resume their place.
The room is still; the wavering walls stand tight
Against the floor; the strength of pain is spent
And now at last you cling to this hard bed,
Become your refuge and your battlement.

Discharged Patient

THEY have mended the bones
And healed the cut of the knife.
Now they put the shuttle into your own hands, weaver.
You alone can gather and repair
The tattered edges of a life.

PART IV

Voice of This Land

For American Poets

"Once only Indians lived in this land. Then came strangers from across the Great Water. . . . The strangers have become many and they fill the country. They dig gold from my mountains; they build cities of my stones and rocks; they make fine clothes from the hides and fur of animals that eat my grass. None of the things that make their riches did they bring with them from across the water; all belongs to my land, the land the Great Mystery gave to the Indian."

HIAMOVÍ, High Chief of the
Cheyennes and Dakotas.*

THE poets are returning to America. They are looking
homeward,
From the distant places across seas, from the distant
places within the mind.
They are rediscovering her, with strength unspent,
energies unchronicled.
They are looking clearly, with new eyes, searching what
they can find.

And this is a good thing for us to see in our day; it is
healthy.
Where should a plant find sap for its roots, be nour-
ished, if not from its own soil?

* From the Foreword to *The Indians' Book*.

The spring is on them, it is rising, it is cool and sweet
in the tight tendrils;
It is coming surely now into flower, it will not wither
or spoil.

Strange the long drought, the barren days, the land
wasting
For want of one strong cloud that could condense
into rain
And wet the earth. Flowers bloomed unscented, fruit
untasting.
This shall not happen again.

Now the young men, homesick on Montparnasse, in the
beautiful French forests,
On Spanish sands, turn a remembering eye and write out
of their blood
Of wars their fathers fought, or the shape of their farm-
land along the Ohio.
They see the evening light over Ontario, hear the Chat-
tahoochie in flood.

This is right. There are poems here to be spoken;
There are voices that will not be stilled.
Put the words together though the rhythm halts and
is broken,
The need shall be filled.

Yet for all your young life, your hungry vigor, your
freshly aroused devotion,

There are great poems here that you will not find, that
will never be written or said.

Long ago we silenced the voices, thrust earth into the
throats, let a conqueror's oppression

Stamp out the living spark of the mind, as time destroys
flesh that is dead.

Remember we do not belong here. We came from an-
other country,

Though our forefathers braved the sea in small ships,
faced the ominous shore,

Sunk deep roots, hewed the woods, bled into the earth,
planted their new traditions

In the sand of the south and against the north rocks
where the bleak seas roar.

They fought the sharp battles, made peace and treaties,
and broke them,

Pressed into the furthestmost land with courage and a
desperate zeal.

This sprawling civilization is ours now, from the height
of its smoke stacks

To the depth of its mines. Our life is the roar of each
loom, the turn of each wheel.

Yet as sometimes the old house and grounds of a long
dispossessed owner

Hold memories that come up like a ghost between us
and our word,

So there are voices that spoke here once profound, ele-
mental

No one of us ever heard

There was a race here. O swift Iroquois! O strong-bowed
Ojibway!

In fire over Penobscot hills, deep in the Kentucky Trace,
O moccasined feet, you sleep forever in your earth, you
fell unbroken,
Losing your heritage and your life together, as befitting
a proud race.

And far to the west, across the plains, beyond the great
Mississippi,
Were dwellers in the sun, rovers among the hills, living
a life apart.
O wise Navajo at your loom, O quick riding Morning-
Star Pawnee,
Your years have suffered our deep slow invasion into the
heart.

Yours was the first voice of America, the knowledge of
its wind, its stillness,
The meaning of Tacoma, the high peak forever covered
with snow,
The mystery of red Colorado cutting its way through
the Canyon,
The songs of a deep earth rhythm, of a life we shall never
know.

You left messages in the earth, but we do not compre-
hend them.
You were wise not to write your songs, but to teach
them from old to young.

Better be lost forever than imitated or grow faint on a
bookshelf

When, with the old meaning, they can neither be spoken
nor sung.

Yet over the width of this land that was once Indian
country,

From the blue Allegheny ridge, to the high peaks where
the shadows are long,

Where the dust spirals up from the plains, where the
sharp stars are cold in the pine trees,

Beneath the young grass, tuned in the wind, there linger
the fragments of song.

And forever there shall come a moment to each Amer-
ican poet,

Who listens with heart and mind to the voices of his
land,

When he must be silent, and the breath of his words
shall be taken from him

Into a pulse-beat he cannot understand.

Twenty Years (1914-1934)

Now, the same wind of August.
The same fields ripen in sun;
Cold seas wash against the stones.
The web that was spun is unspun;
Long rain has whitened the bones.

Yet the threads are not broken.
More delicate than the air,
They tangle close about us,
Finer than a bright planet's hair.
Sinister and murderous.

How carefully, unknowing,
We are weaving, and we make
New threads fastening the old.
New threads strong that will not break,
That will complicate, and hold.

The steel sword is powerless,
And the bomb, the wing, the gun.
What shall break it will be those
Strong enough to look in the sun,
To accept the wind that blows;

Though it be a wind crying
Destruction to the deep heart.
All that cunning can ensnare,
This strength alone will tear apart—
This alone make clear the air.

Old House

IT is not easy to forsake old places,—

A house where you have lived long and grown content.

Small familiar things, covertly tenacious,

Still hold you; the heart protests their banishment.

It may be good to feel the creak of stairways

Under a worn tread, and know that even pain

And sorrow that hang here close in memories,

Are mellowed, as stones worn in winter and rain.

Yet when the time comes, and need of life presses

For a fresh creation, new pattern and shape

To catch the daylight, be strong and ruthless.

Let the stones fall; only hold beyond escape

A bare design that laid the old foundation,

Which stood against the winds, made comfort and bed

For love and sleep, a fire on the hearth, a vista

Beyond the eaves, a shelter over the head.

These things were good, they shall be good forever.

If old walls crumble, you can build them once more.

Scatter the shadows, go out, do not linger.

Life changes and moves, it calls beside your door.

Landmarks

“LEFT, from the oak
To the mill race brook.”
So the deed runs
In the town clerk’s book.

But the oak is gone
And the turf grows over
The mill race ditch
With grass and clover.

Little may stand
For a title’s mark,
If the earth shall change
Or a star go dark.

Then leave your son
No land or treasure,
That the foot must pace
Or the scales measure;

But an eye to behold
And a heart that lifts
And strength to fulfill,—
These be your gifts.

Dynamic Design

WIDE, blue-white, streams of light
Cross the pale sky at night;
Searchlights swinging high,
Small plane against the sky,
And the moon over the sea.
The arc of these three,
Water, light and wing,
Is an eloquent thing.

Mountain

GIVE me rock that leans against the sky,
Trees that climb upward, sparsely, short of breath,
Height that tunes the wind to a taut cry,—
A colder death.

Shape my horizon by this clear edge,
That lifts the moon on a rocky shoulder.
What if the dark is cut by a darker wedge,
Stronger, bolder?

Height is a need. Man strives to rise,
To see far, to find the air clearer.
For him the mountain shall bring down the skies,
Bring stars nearer.

Shallow-Eyes

LIKE brook water
On brown leaf mold,
Her eyes are no deeper
Than a drop may hold.

Too shallow for drowning,
Too shallow for thirst.
By the parched, and the stricken,
She shall never be cursed.

For who is not solaced
To find his own face,
Looking for heaven
In a shallow place.

Dispossession

Connecticut River Valley

I WHO love this land, who love this wide valley,
The straight high temples of the hills, the river's
curve,

The smooth unbroken water, the fertile meadows,
What is my love, what is this memory I serve?

I, a stranger from another land, a newcomer
Of two brief centuries ago, alien and pale,
Talking a strange tongue, looking over this vastness
With short-seeing eyes, dimly, behind a veil;

What should I, who was bred in square houses
With fear and a flintlock always ready at hand,
Who looked from a barricade for smoke or arrows,
What should I know of the meaning of this land

That you know, who walked with velvet feet in these
forests,

Who dipped a long silent paddle into this stream,
Remembered no other place, worshiped upon these hill-
tops,

And then saw land and people pass as in a dark dream?

What is my love to yours, O ghostly Chieftain,
How can I look at this land from within your eyes?
Where I see rolling hills and a meadow pasture,
You saw forever the smoke of the wigwams rise.

You saw there the place of birth and death. Your
eternal

Hunting Ground was as near as the distant view.
How should I, alien, understand the love you bore it?
Yet for a moment, here on this hilltop, I knew.

Tropic Color

THIS is a lute
For full strings' plucking,
A fruit
For red lips' sucking,

For eyes
Stronger and bolder,
More wise
And much older

Than those
Cool within,
Whose blood flows
Too slow, too thin.

Night Sky

Havana

TRUTH sometimes comes like this.
Clear, mind-rending like mad fantasy,
A new dimension fills
The spaces of an old expectancy.
Above black crouching hills
Hang globes, mounds, ridges of star galaxy.

This is the tropic night—
Earth lit with a strange light.
The Milky Way leans out
And arches over blackness, pierced with a fine
Cobwebbed haze
Of clear-angled rays
From layer on layer of stars in intricate design.

The northern sky, our quiet dome, is gone.
Within this turbulent depth the mind swings on and on,
Forsaking caution, forsaking the firm earth,
Tempting the outer rims where nebulæ have birth,
Clinging lightly to the last known edge of thought,
And flattened by a fresh wind in the face
That blows from an incalculable space.

Easter Sunrise—Caribbean Sea

HERE is no rock hewn grave,
No earth to be cleft asunder;
Over the long green wave
The sky is dark with thunder.

The hiss of a hot rain
Light at the sea's edge breaking.
You who sleep on the Spanish Main
This is the day for waking!

Not with lilies and bells,
Or a sweet incense burning,
But white blossoms cresting the swells
Of the wild sea churning.

Pirate, captain and slave,
The conqueror and the conquered,
Sailor, whose ship is a grave,
Bound down and forever anchored;

Slip from your salt wet shrouds,
Rise from your endless dreaming,
Above an altar of clouds
Your resurrection is streaming.

High Wind at Spanish Point

THIS is not only the last strip of the land,
Or the beginning of the bright mysterious sea.
It is the end of something. Give me your hand;
Here in the knife of this sharp wind, turn to me.

What is so poignant about this pale shore
Where the rocks break, and the long sea slips in?
Was it yesterday I stood here, heard the roar
Of water, watched sails fill, and a long journey begin?

Did I wave, yearning, after a flower-decked prow,
See the strong oars dip, backs bend, hear a parting
shout?
Once I stood here saying farewell. Must I say it now,
Even if no voice answers, no ship sets out?

I fear this place of parting. Give me your hand.
Let us find refuge here, under this grassy hollow.
Hold me close out of the wind, close to the land.
Tell me there is no farewell to say, no sail to follow!

By a Tropical Shore

For Elinor Wylie

THE pale green wave breaks on the curving shore,
Burned white beneath the clear hot sun of spring.
The soft sound is a fairy ocean's roar.
An awkward bird floats on a lazy wing.
Beneath the feet I crush the little shells,
Pink, delicate and perfect, carved in light,
And watch the silver fish that leap the swells,
Dripping with jeweled water in their flight.

You never saw this iridescent land,
This unreal ocean and imagined sky,
Or sifted with slow fingers this fine sand,
Or, startled, watched the soaring heron fly
Against the low hung stars. Yet everywhere
I find your foot-print on this shining air.

Walk with the western wind over this sea
Companioned by that spirit whom you knew
Too well to brook the infidelity
Which time and space were asking as their due.
Now touching light-tipped fingers to the clouds,
And airy feet above a cresting wave,
Fling to the sunset glow your thin worn shrouds,—
You two shall know no dry nor watery grave.

But where the polished nacre glows within
A shell, where violet clouds bring down the rain,
Or where the bubble moon is blown too thin,
And stars are drowned, you yet shall live again,—
Live in the lyric pulse, remembering,
Singing to soar, and soaring still to sing!

White Lilies in Connecticut

IN my neighbor's garden, over the stone wall,
White annunciation lilies stand, against blue
Larkspur. White and blue, madonna colors, tall
And filled with light, they seem to hold my view,
Delicate and lovely. Yet I would look past
Them to the staunch rough bay bushes, the beach
Plum, the salty meadows, gray stones, and the last
Gnarled, stunted tree that bends above the reach
Of long cold waves.

Such flowers are out of place
In this New England country, on this shore.
Incongruous they are, as the first pale face
That looked into the wilderness, walked where
No such righteous feet had walked before,
Who raised tall narrow spires for prayer,
And set a barricade against a door.

At Music

How thin have become our words! How they falter
and drop

Before the deeper eloquence of this sound!

This meaning begins at the place where all words stop;
It is feeling, inevitable, profound.

There is no need for words, or the hand's light touch;
The heart is at peace, its restless hunger stilled.
It is quiet, not asking either for little or much,
Simply receiving, like a deep pool that is filled.

Without is confusion; somewhere dark and remote
In another world there are doubts and agonies.
Only certainty pours from your lyric throat,
And strength from these beneficent harmonies.

So we are moved from a moment out of this room.
It may be the lamplight that shines upon your face;
The shadow behind you may be the end of doom.
How shall we know who are trespassers in this place?

Fear

LET the dogs bark,
To break the still
Space of the dark.

The thick night hangs
Heavy and warm,
Oppressed with harm.

Fear is a guttered
Candle, a close
Room, words muttered.

Courage is breath,
A lifted light
In a wide night.

First Valley

AND from the first ship, over the first sea, man came
to the first valley,
Furled his sails, shipped his oars, drew the long dark
prow against the sand,
Followed the hills' curve, turning away from the perilous
waters,
And on a sunny slope planted his vine, and raised his
roof in a sheltered land.

Ages pass and the winds of time scatter his sons and
daughters
To a wider earth, under cold stars, to a life where the
past is undone.
Can they forget what they have not known? Or whence
this strange yearning,
Seeing pale olives, the terraced vineyards, the flat red
roofs in the sun?

Route d'Espagne

AFTER defeat
There is one road to take;
After despair and shame,
Return the way you came.

Peak crowns peak,
Boulders, the ridge.
Go back, go back,
Over the broken bridge,
The lost track.

Dare
The thin air.
Draw breath
Before an icy death.

Then having seen
The face of fear
Grow clear,
And the lost way plain,
Take to the road again.

Autumn Song, Provence

IT is late, the wind is cold, it rattles the long casements,
Blows through thin clefts in the close-grown cypress
wall.

The roar of the wind scatters words; the heart falters.
It is late for love, summer is ended, the dry leaves fall.

The purple grapes are gathered and crushed, the harvest
is over.

Their leaves are metal, burnished copper and gold.
Silver white the olives stand in the sunlight;
Earth has become as bronze and iron, unyielding and
cold.

Why should the weak heart fail for the sound of your
singing?

The shutters are barred, the charcoal smokes on the
hearth.

Put by the pleading of eyes and hands, it is late for
loving.

The gentle season is done; I lie cold as the hard earth.

Stolen kisses are sweet as cooked wine. They are sweeter
For the drop of gall that lies in the depth of the cup.
But the wine is spilled, the goblet falls unheeded.

Put by your song, walk past my window, do not look
up!

Greek Theatre

Arles

WHITE circle of wide rising steps open under the sun,
A bowl half filled with rhythmic measure of form.
This is your home, O poem of grave balanced speech,
O chorus of sonorous ringing words, this is your home.
The light is the light of your eloquence left in the clear
air.

Nor winds have blown it asunder, nor the long storm
Of ages scattered it. The shape of Attic perfection walks
there,

Beneath the twin columns, across the wide stones.
Slowly in rhythmic movement it walks forever, O poem.

Sentimental Journey

LET us make love in the oldest places in the world.

Let us talk about love in the places of the ages.
If we cannot stand before the long Chinese wall,
Or the Pyramids, or the temples of the sages;

Yet we shall walk where many feet have been before,
The Roman road through Provence will bear our interlacing print.

I shall take your hand where Gaul and Gladiator meet,
Where the stone arch of triumph bears the spear and the flint.

You may kiss me in a corner by the wall of the Popes;
Where the Rhone rushes swift by the tower of Nicolette,

I shall pick you a gay flower to wear in your coat.
The spring will remember what the stones must forget.

Les Saintes Maries de la Mer will look on our foolishness.

Must I give you your sword by the wall of Aigues Mortes?

I am not a brave lover, I fear the call to arms,
O red sails of the Crusaders, may the voyage be short!

Your breast will be my shelter in the long winds at
Cette.

The stones of the Basilica on the hill of Narbonne
Shall hold our whispers; and when the dark night comes
I shall sleep by your side within the walls of Carca-
sonne.

The Queen of Heaven

(On a dance-composition of Angna Enters)

LADY of Heaven,
You who sit alone,
The sky is your canopy
The earth is your throne.

To suffer our sorrow
You bent from above,
And gave in pity
The Rose of your love.

He is the Rose
Worn at your breast,
Broken to bring the world
Comfort and rest.

He is the Rose
Torn from your side,
By His own thorns
To be crucified.

With the fair linen
Lave His face,
Who was born in beauty,
Who was born in grace.

Lift Him on high
For all to see,
Clothed in His mantle
Of nativity.

This Last Tree

WITH a dull axe you slowly fell the trees
Within that living grove which is my heart;
Scatter their boughs and humble to their knees
These tall strong-rooted trunks that stand apart,
Waiting to bear anew love's burst of flower,
Sheltering water of our hidden spring.
Now these are doomed; and here within the hour
Is a bleak hillside where the axes ring.

O, I had rather they went down in wrath,
On a great winter night of steel-breathed wind;
In a dark hurricane that cuts a path
Of wideswept desolation; but not thinned
Slowly, with steady blows, with creaking sound,
And I still here to see them on the ground.

Globe of Summer

AND then the summer came with globed still days.
The arcs of sky and earth and sea were one,
Enclosed in light, the perfect unison.
Great clouds drew back the long descending rays;
Waters were mirrors of a crystal glaze,
All earth returned the clear heat of the sun.
At dawn the shining circle was begun,
Colored at dusk by opalescent haze,
And round stars hung in the black globe of night.

And we, asking the endless questions, looking to sea,
Finding no answer, lay and drank in the light,
Feeling the strength of this orb'd immensity,
This circle, reaching beyond the powers of sight;
That curves the path of leaning sail and cloud,
And the hum of the skyward motor on a long flight.

You Will Be Here

WHEN life has crushed the last rich measure of your
blood,

And flattened out your breath and set you free,
Out from the confines of its finite mood
To test the wide fresh edges of infinity;

Then in the empty stillness after you are gone
We shall sit down alone, in a quiet place,
And, as children count their gifts, so one by one
We shall count our treasures, memories that trace

What you were like, and how you spoke and moved,
To bring your quickened presence once again,
Knowing that those whom you most generously loved
Will not call, will not reach after you in vain.

But that somewhere, so slightly gone, you will keep
Touch in the darkness, warm to our need, a voice
clear

On the mind's wind, in the current of the heart. Deep
Under the surfaces of life, you will be here.

I Shall Walk the Earth

I SHALL walk the earth and find
Things not colored by the mind.
Let me but receive and take
What is here, nor try to make
Reasons, patterns; let me be
Lost in sensibility.

Let the shapes of flowers press
Simply in the consciousness,
Leaf and petal. Let this tree
Strike its plunging roots in me,
And the wind against the hill
Lift the edges of my will.

I shall curl within the wave,
Suck the stones, and in them crave
Each receding drop of sea.
Skim the sharp-winged bird in me.
Pierce me now the smell of pine
In the sun. I am the wine
Within the grape, the round, sweet
Ripening kernel of the wheat.
I can feel the sickle pass,
Die this death within the grass,
Lean with the cliff's stubbornness,
Surge within the streams that press
On their yielding banks, the flood
Water, rising as my blood

Roaring to the sea, feel tides
Drawing from the ocean's sides;
Till I know the curving turn
Of the earth in space, discern
Space itself, where planets burn . . .

October in the Sun

GOLD light pours over the hillsides, down along the
streams.

Fluttering few faint leaves are gold.
In this warm land autumn comes late,
Frosts wait,
The nights are hardly cold.
Noon is still heavy. Long perpendicular beams
Pierce the tall woods.
It is summer, and not summer.

The first crimson flash, berry and leaf,
Is the dogwood against the north slope.
Sharp joy, sharp grief,
Or a too swift hope,
Are banished in this mild air,
Diffused, made mellow everywhere.
It is autumn, and not autumn.

The warm days that have been tossed
Lightly over the hills to the south, are not lost.
See! The grape ripens, there is juice, there is wine,
Heady and fine.
And a blaze of orange marigolds burns against the wall.
Warm your hands,
Look into the sun,
Your winter has not yet begun.
And for your courage, watch the delicate flight,

Soft floating, indolent and bright,
So soon to die,
The frivolous winged, brave, endearing,
Last golden butterfly.

Strange Evidence

APRIL again.

Black bough, wet earth, small leaf,

And too much rain.

Clouds hanging low in the skies.

Clouds thickening and forming, to gather once more

Over the earth's dark fields.

There is hunger and poverty,

Confusion breaking like a wave against the shore—

Not a slow tide that yields

To rise and fall,

But breaking, destroying, scattering,

And sending a blind mist into the eyes.

This is the world you left.

Men have not grown more wise.

Hope is still cleft by small despairs.

The light is dimmed

By shadows no larger than the hand.

Mouths are iron rimmed,

Eyes grow hard,

Watching the promise die away,

Watching life yield to difficulty,

And the cold sunless day,

Of bitter unrelenting charity.

And I,

Remembering your sensitive

Quick reach; the consciousness

Of all that drew upon your tenderness,
Almost find heart to say
It is as well you are away;
Thinking of you only
As that spirit, innocent and free,
For whom my heart is lonely.

Yet as the years bring strange
Evidences of unfolding and of change,
Within the seed, within the bud, within the youth,
 grown man,
Surely the complete plan
Is unbroken, and the sphere
Is rounded, though not here.

Why should I deny
To you living and growth, or try
To hold you in a perfect shell,
Inviolable of memory, knowing well
Your wisdom, radiantly grown,
Is wider than my own?

You stand now shoulder high.
Under what sky I do not know,
Nor what airs blow.
But where life is quick and full,—
Determination rife, or an old wonder
Breaks through,—I feel against my shoulder
Your touch, grown stronger, older;

Only a touch, a bare
Breath, a word spoken low,—
To say that you are there,
And that you know.

Words To Be Left on the Air

THERE are few words
Of all those taken and given
That remain clear,
Words not smooth and even,
Rough, hard to say,
Strong to hear.

There is another day;
Sun comes up over the hill.
There is little peace.
There are still
Moments only.
Grief is cruel, hunger sharp,
Old age lonely.
But the will endures.
This knowledge is fire for the night.

The stars above the roof top
Are love, and the delight
Of its swift taken breath;
Strength in the far endeavor;
And the flame apprehended,
That beyond death
Burns forever,
Not extinguished
Or ended.

Date Due

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